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RWU Law News: The Newsletter Of Roger Williams University School of Law 12-2020

Barry Bridges

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RWU Law News

The Newsletter of
Roger Williams University School of Law



December 2020

Building a culture of service and innovation

As this challenging year wound to an end, *Rhode Island Lawyers Weekly* featured a front-page, above-the-fold story on Dean Greg Bowman -- his views on legal education, Rhode Island, the pandemic, and RWU Law's next chapter.

[Read On](#)



A Deep Bench



'Unmatched Opportunities'

For 3L Karen Lara, a recent decision by the U.S. Supreme Court to grant cert. in a case she first saw argued at RWU Law as a 1L symbolizes the progress of her own educational journey.

[Full story](#)

Our Man in Washington

President Trump nominates Mike Andrews '97 – currently Staff Director and Chief Counsel to the U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs – to the U.S. Court of Federal Claims.

[Get details](#)

Alums Among Historic RI Judicial Nominations

Superior Court Magistrate Richard Raspallo '97 and Central Falls Municipal Judge Elizabeth Ortiz '10 were included in a list of nominations that would elevate Black, Latina and Asian-American women to high court seats.

[Learn more](#)

'Law isn't a foreign language anymore ...'



Tim White, WPRI 12 Reporter

One of Southern New England's top investigative reporters explains why pursuing a Master of Studies in Law at RWU Law makes sense.

[Tim's Story](#)



RWU Law's popular patio is dedicated to founding faculty member and dean from 2014 to 2020, Michael J. Yelnosky.

[Read the story ...](#)



RWU Law invites Rhode Island K-12 students to submit drawings, essays for contest on how RBG inspired them.

[Learn more ...](#)



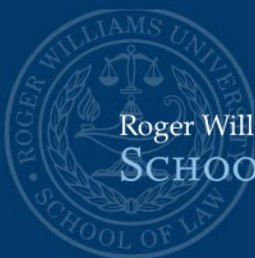
3L Louisa Fredey and law librarian Nicole Dyszlewski on the centennial of women gaining the right to vote -- and in RI, to practice law.

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SCHOOL OF LAW

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RWU Law dean seeking to build on culture of service, innovation

December 9, 2020

Barry Bridges, Rhode Island Lawyers Weekly



RWU Law Dean Gregory W. Bowman.

Image Credit: James Jones/RWU Law.

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* * *

After graduating from Northwestern University's Pritzker School of Law, Gregory W. Bowman, the newly appointed sixth dean of Roger Williams University School of Law, initially followed a "BigLaw" trajectory and joined Baker McKenzie, where he practiced as an international trade and corporate attorney.

But in 2004, the West Virginia native heeded an inner voice and made the move to the hallways of the legal academy, launching his teaching career at Mississippi College School of Law.

"Life is full of chapters. I loved practicing law, but I felt this really strong calling to teach and mentor future lawyers," Bowman says. "I enjoyed mentoring newer lawyers at the firm, and I wanted to do that on a much larger scale. I think in my heart I always wanted to teach."

In 2009, Bowman joined the faculty of West Virginia University College of Law, another “only in the state” institution, and served as the school’s associate dean for academic affairs before being named dean in 2015.

With that foundation, Bowman took the reins at RWU in July at a time when the pandemic was challenging assumptions and changing the playing field for educators of all stripes. He cites RWU’s public service bent, its commitment to diversity, and the school’s unique position in the state as factors that attracted him to Rhode Island.

“RWU Law has all of the elements to succeed as an innovative, modern law school — dedicated staff and faculty, a clear sense of mission, and an opportunity to collaborate with other parts of the university. I am excited about what we are doing,” Bowman says.

With his first semester at the helm wrapping up, Bowman recently fielded questions on keeping the law school on solid ground during the pandemic and amid broader changes in the legal education landscape.

Q. Why was RWU Law’s deanship an attractive opportunity for you?

A. One huge advantage RWU Law has is that it is the only law school in Rhode Island. We have these great relationships with law firms, companies, nonprofit organizations, judges, legislators and so on. This provides lots of exciting learning and career opportunities for our students, and so many opportunities for the law school to serve the state. I saw this same sort of solo law school advantage when I was at WVU Law.

Another thing that attracted me was RWU Law’s strong culture of service. Our legal clinics, externships and pro bono programs are national caliber, and my faculty and staff colleagues who run these programs are top notch. We are a service law school that trains students to be lawyers with a client service mindset, and I love that.

A third key reason that I came to RWU Law is that there is opportunity to innovate here. The university has a new president and a new provost, who, like me, are deeply dedicated to innovation and interdisciplinary collaboration among the university’s colleges. The faculty and staff at RWU Law have demonstrated a willingness to work hard and innovate in ways that benefit our students and serve the public. Just look at what this law school has achieved since its founding. I really believe that the successful law schools of tomorrow will be those that innovate and collaborate. RWU Law has these key ingredients for future greatness.

Q. How has RWU Law managed the pandemic? Has in-person instruction largely continued? Will the experience have a permanent effect on the delivery of legal education?

A. I am really proud of how we have managed the pandemic all across the university. This fall we have a combination of in-person classes, hybrid classes and fully online classes. Students and

faculty could choose whether to attend in person or remotely, and approximately 30 percent of our law students and faculty stayed fully online this fall. Masks and social distancing were mandatory. We implemented enhanced cleaning protocols, and all students, staff and faculty who were on campus received regular COVID-19 tests.

The old saying is that necessity is the parent of invention, and that's certainly been true during this pandemic. One thing we've learned is that online programming can work in a law school when done right. I think we will be holding online and hybrid classes and events for many years to come.

Q. A hallmark of RWU Law has been its emphasis on clinics, externships and other experiential student programs, which is now among the ABA's requirements for accredited schools. Does the RWU curriculum strike the right balance between traditional classroom courses and "practice ready" offerings?

A. RWU Law's experiential education programs are among its key strengths, and I think it does a great job of balancing doctrinal education and experiential learning. Our doctrinal classes provide students with the knowledge and tools for practicing law; our experiential programs help them learn how to use them. And representing a client while in law school really teaches you what it means to be a lawyer.

"Thinking like a lawyer" is really only part of the battle. We would never say that a woodshop class just teaches you to "think like a carpenter." It teaches you how to be one, too. We teach our students how to think like a lawyer and how to be one, and they learn why it matters.

Q. In a nutshell, how would you describe the premise of your 2018 Toledo Law Review article, "The Rise of the Creative Law School"? How will you bring those ideas to bear at RWU?

A. That article encapsulates a lot of my thinking about legal education, and I really enjoyed writing it. From the late 1800s until about 2010, U.S. law schools have followed the same model of legal education, and it was a tried-and-true recipe for success.

But ever since the financial crisis of 2008, U.S. legal education has experienced rapid and massive change that is both destabilizing and disconcerting. Students don't automatically see legal education as a secure career path anymore. Some U.S. law schools have closed, and many others have eliminated programs. So while 20 years ago a law school could succeed by not changing, law schools today have to be creative, nimble and forward-thinking. Collaboration with other disciplines to create new classes and new legal programs of study will be essential. And innovation in the classroom now matters more than ever.

Q. What steps can the head of a law school take to enhance the diversity and inclusiveness of the student body, faculty and staff?

A. This is one of the most important questions for legal education. To be truly effective, the legal profession must reflect the population we serve. And to do that, we need to be a community that

is diverse, inclusive and dedicated to belonging. We must look for, recruit and support talented faculty, staff and students from many different backgrounds and places, and we must have a “growth mindset” — we must be lifelong learners who strive to improve both who we are and how we support all members of our community.

We must change how we look at and teach about the law and its power structures. And we must understand that this benefits everyone. All boats rise when we focus on diversity, inclusion and belonging.

RWU Law has been very dedicated to this, and we will continue to be. And in doing so, one thing we will continue to be committed to is listening to and including our students in this work. We exist to serve them, and our students — the lawyers and leaders of the future — deserve it.

Q. What should the school's priorities be in its next 25 years?

A. RWU Law has a strong foundation, but over the next 25 years there will be a lot of change in higher education and in society. We will need to stay quick on our feet and think about innovative ways to train our law students and serve the legal profession and society. I think we will see greater collaboration with other disciplines in higher education, more online and remote learning, and more focus on technology and the law.

But I also think we will need to stay true to some of the law's core values, such as individual liberty, privacy, equal protection and justice.

In a rapidly changing world, those who can see change coming and adapt quickly will succeed. I think RWU Law is that sort of law school.

Q. At your first RWU Law commencement ceremony next spring, what advice will you give to newly minted J.D.s ready to start their careers?

A. Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes said, “Every calling is great when greatly pursued.” And I think there is no more noble profession than the legal profession when one pursues it as a calling — as a way to help make the world a better place. I will tell our new graduates — who on that day will become our brand-new colleagues — to follow their hearts and use their legal knowledge and skills in the service of others. That is what living greatly within the law means. That is why I am a lawyer and law professor.

Q. How do you spend your time away from the law school?

A. I love my job; it is my calling. But away from it I love to travel whenever I can, both in the U.S. and abroad. I was born overseas, studied in Europe for two years, and have run study-abroad programs in three different countries on three different continents. I practiced international trade law and worked for clients across the globe.

Travel gives me perspective, and it brings me joy. I love visiting a place for the first time, and I love returning to familiar places, too. It's like seeing old friends again. I miss those experiences right now.

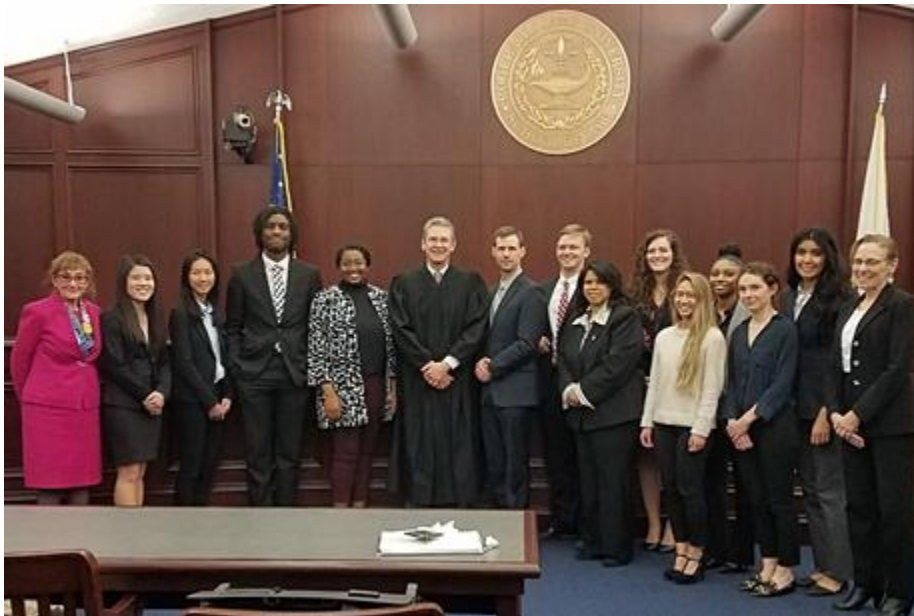
I also had imagined that I would be able to explore all over Rhode Island; there is so much to do and see here. The pandemic has interfered with that, and I look forward to post-pandemic adventures in my new home state.

'Unmatched Opportunities'

For 3L Karen Lara, a recent decision by the U.S. Supreme Court to grant cert. in a case she first saw argued at RWU Law as a 1L symbolizes the progress of her own educational journey.

December 16, 2020

Michael M. Bowden



RWU Law faculty and students with the Honorable John J. McConnell, Jr. (center) on March 25, 2019. Karen Lara is 2nd from right.

For [Karen Lara](#), a recent decision by the U.S. Supreme Court to grant cert. in a case she first saw argued at Roger Williams University School of Law as a 1L symbolizes the progress of her own educational journey.

It began on March 25, 2019, when [the Honorable John J. McConnell, Jr.](#), Chief Judge of the United States District Court for the District of Rhode Island, held court – as has become his yearly custom – in the Honorable Bruce M. Selya Appellate Courtroom at RWU Law’s main campus in Bristol.

As a packed room of students looked on, the court heard argument on summary judgment motions in a pair of consolidated civil cases. One issue raised was whether it was lawful for a police officer to enter a home without a warrant in response to receiving a complaint that someone inside the home was despondent, angry, and had access to a gun.

“The entire 1L class attended the arguments, which were followed by Q & A sessions with the lawyers and then later with the judge,” recalled [Professor Michael Yelnosky](#), who was dean at the time. “It was, as always, a great event.”

“It was unbelievable,” agreed Lara, who was among those 1Ls-now-3Ls. “We got to see a real district court case being argued before an actual district court judge, in real time, right in our own school. And afterward we could ask the judge and lawyers questions about what we had just seen. I’m not sure most of us quite understood the magnitude of that opportunity at the time.”

Such events, however, are an integral mainstay of a Roger Williams legal education.

“When courts hear arguments at the law school, it provides our students with extraordinary opportunities to see the practice of law in action and get to know some of the nation’s leading jurists,” said [Dean Gregory W. Bowman](#). “At RWU Law, we deeply appreciate our strong relationships with the federal and state judiciaries.”

Judge McConnell ruled that the warrantless entry into the plaintiff’s home and ultimate seizure of the plaintiff’s guns was justified by the “community caretaking” exception to the warrant requirement of the Fourth Amendment, and granted the defendants’ summary judgment on that claim. *Caniglia v. Strom*, 396 F. Supp. 3d 227 (D. R.I. 2019). On appeal, a panel of the [United States Court of Appeals for the First Circuit](#) affirmed in an opinion written by the RWU Law courtroom’s namesake, Judge Selya. *Caniglia v. Strom*, No. 19-1764 (1st Cir. 2020).



Karen Lara '21

In the meantime, Lara had established herself as a standout student at RWU Law, a member of the school's [Honors Program](#) and [Law Review](#). The Arizona native – whose parents originally came to the U.S. from Mexico as migrant farm workers – also served as president of the Latino Law Students Association, and as a teaching assistant for [Professor Colleen Brown](#).

“Seeing the sacrifices my parents made when we were kids, I really wanted to take advantage of the opportunities they were giving me,” Lara said. “They used to say, ‘Our job is on the farms, your job is to go to school and study hard.’ So I learned to take my education very seriously.”

As it turned out, Lara's educational trajectory matched that of the case she'd heard during her 1L year. The [Honorable O. Rogerie Thompson](#) (a member of RWU Law's Board of Directors) selected Lara as a judicial intern at the First Circuit during the summer of 2019 – just as *Caniglia* happened to be passing through that court.

“It was such a wonderful internship opportunity, right after completing my 1L year, to go and work at the First Circuit,” she said. While *Caniglia* itself never landed on her desk, “I was there to experience this next step in the process.”

A few weeks ago, on November 20, 2020, the United States Supreme Court granted certiorari in the case on the question, “Whether the ‘community caretaking’ exception to the Fourth Amendment’s warrant requirement extends to the home.”

And while the pandemic has kept Lara at home in San Luis, Ariz., for most of 2020, she noted that “RWU Law actually did get me to the Supreme Court last year!” She had taken the Honors Perspectives course, “U.S. Supreme Court Cases,” taught by [Professor Jared Goldstein](#), which culminated in a visit to Washington, D.C., to observe cases being argued at the Court.

“So there are three levels on which I relate to this case, and they all emphasize the unmatched opportunities that I received at RWU,” Lara said. “I loved my time there. I am very grateful to have received such in-depth exposure to so many aspects of the law.”

Lara originally came to Rhode Island to support her fiancé, [Manuel Lugo '20](#), who had enrolled at RWU Law a year ahead of her and is now an attorney with the [Florence Immigrant and Refugee Rights Project](#) in Phoenix, Ariz. Before starting law school herself in 2018, Lara worked as a legal assistant at the Providence law firm of Motley Rice for partner [Robert J. McConnell](#) (Judge McConnell's brother, who was honored in his own right as one of [RWU Law's 2019 Champions for Justice](#)), an experience she described as "extraordinary and eye-opening."

Lara plans to join Lugo in Arizona upon graduation, but added, “I’m sure we’ll be visiting Rhode Island pretty often!”

Mike Andrews '97 Nominated to U.S. Court of Federal Claims

President Trump’s nomination of RWU Law alumnus follows two state judicial nominations of alumni by Rhode Island governor last week.

December 15, 2020

Michael M. Bowden



Last week, President Donald J. Trump nominated Terrence M. Andrews '97 – better known as “Mike” to his classmates at Roger Williams University School of Law and most of his colleagues today – to serve as a judge on the [United States Court of Federal Claims](#).

Originally from California but a resident of Virginia for many years, Andrews currently serves as Staff Director and Chief Counsel to the United States Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, which studies the unique problems of American Indian and Alaska Native peoples, including education, economic development, land management, trust responsibilities, health care, and claims against the United States. He is also Chairman of the Victim Advisory Group for the United States Sentencing Commission.

Prior to assuming his duties on Capitol Hill, Andrews served at the Department of Homeland Security, the Department of Justice and as General Counsel and Chief Prosecutor for the Pascua Yaqui Indian Tribe in Tucson, Ariz.

“When I when I was out in Arizona, we litigated [tribal land claim issues] in the Court of Federal Claims,” Andrews said. “Fast forward to when I was a Deputy Assistant Secretary at the Department of Housing and Urban Development, I defended those actions. So I’ve been on both sides in this court, both as plaintiff’s counsel and assisting our attorneys, government counsel at HUD.”

It was the fall of 1994 when Andrews joined RWU Law’s second graduating class.

“Mike was a great guy,” recalled Professor Emeritus Bruce I. Kogan. “I recall that he and John Ryan [RWU Law dean from 1993 to 1998] really got along.” (Andrews explained that Ryan was a fellow Californian who had been a legal colleague of his father.)

“Everyone at the law school, and particularly those of us who were here in the early years, takes great pride in the success of the members of our first graduating classes,” said Professor Michael

Yelnosky, who taught Andrews Civil Procedure during his first year. “Mike has already had quite a successful career, and I congratulate him for doing so despite having me as a teacher.”

Chuckling at Yelnosky’s self-depreciation, Andrews said, “I hate to sound old, but at this point I’ve taught law myself at three other law schools, and man, I can tell you that Rogers Williams was never one of those schools that just goes through the motions. They put you through the grinder. They challenge the hell out of you. And you know, to this day I still quote [retired RWU Professor of Law Edward Eberle] when I talk with colleagues about the Constitution. I tell them, ‘That’s not how Professor Eberle taught me, so you must be wrong!’”

During his final semester at RWU Law in 1997, Andrews participated in the Criminal Defense Clinic under Professor Andrew Horwitz.

“Mike was a pleasure to work with as a law student; he is still fondly remembered around the clinic office for his warmth, outgoing nature, and sense of humor,” Horwitz said. “It’s very exciting to have a graduate of my clinical program go on to such heights of achievement. We’re so proud of his accomplishments.”

Dean Gregory W. Bowman agreed.

“RWU Law alumni like Mike really demonstrate that our law school is on the move,” he said. “We have graduates all across the country doing great things, and we are excited for their success.”

Andrews earned his B.A., magna cum laude, from Morgan State University; his M.A. from Salve Regina University; his J.D. from Roger Williams University School of Law; and his L.L.M. from George Washington University School of Law.

If his nomination is not approved by the end of Trump’s term, Andrews said, “I will probably either be carried over ’til the next Congress or possibly renominated by [President-elect Joe] Biden. I’m in a kind of unusual position where I actually have bipartisan support for my nomination.”

The Court of Federal Claims consists of 16 judges nominated by the President and confirmed by the Senate for a term of 15 years. If confirmed, Andrews would join “an ever larger cohort of RWU alumni who have reached a pinnacle in our profession by becoming judges,” Yelnosky observed.

Just last week, two other RWU alumni were nominated to the judiciary by Rhode Island Governor Gina Raimondo. Central Falls Municipal Judge Elizabeth Ortiz ’10 – who also earned her undergraduate degree at RWU in 2007 – was nominated to the Family Court bench, making Ortiz the first Latina ever nominated to that court. If approved by the Senate, she would fill the lifetime seat left open by retiring Judge John E. McCann III.

The governor also named Superior Court Magistrate Richard Raspallo ’97 as a Superior Court nominee to replace Judge Allen P. Rubine. “I remember Mr. Raspallo,” Andrews said of his

erstwhile classmate. “Sharp guy. I obviously wish him all the best with his nomination and getting through. He’d make a great judge.”

Two RWU Law Alumni Included Among Historic Judicial Nominations

Superior Court Magistrate Richard Raspallo '97 and Central Falls Municipal Judge Elizabeth Ortiz '10 were included in a list of nominees nominations that would elevate Black, Latina and Asian-American women to high court seats.

December 8, 2020

Michael M. Bowden



Superior Court Magistrate Richard Raspallo '97 and Central Falls Municipal Judge Elizabeth Ortiz '10.

Two Roger Williams University School of Law alumni figured prominently today when Governor Gina Raimondo announced a number of historic judicial nominations that would elevate Black, Latina and Asian-American women to sought-after court seats.

Raimondo named Central Falls Municipal Judge Elizabeth Ortiz '10 – a “double Hawk,” who also earned her undergraduate degree at RWU in 2007 – to the Family Court bench, making

Ortiz the first Latina ever nominated to that court. If approved by the Senate, Ortiz will fill the lifetime seat left open by retiring Judge John E. McCann III.

The governor also named Superior Court Magistrate Richard Raspallo '97 as a Superior Court nominee to replace Judge Allen P. Rubine.

“We are thrilled that the governor has nominated these two talented RWU Law graduates for judicial vacancies,” said RWU Law Dean Gregory W. Bowman. “They’re excellent choices and great examples of success in public service.”

Ortiz is a sole practitioner with offices in North Providence and Pawtucket. Prior to attending law school, she worked as a paralegal for several prominent Rhode Island law firms. While attending RWU Law, she participated in the school's Criminal Defense clinic, where she gained hands-on experience in the courtroom representing indigent criminal defendants. After law school, Ortiz served as in-house counsel to Sakonnet Capital Partners, LLC, a film finance company with offices in Michigan, Louisiana and Providence, Rhode Island.

Raspallo was appointed magistrate in 2017. He was formerly chief counsel to House Speaker Nicholas Mattiello, and before that Chief Legal Counsel to Rhode Island House Majority Leader. He also served as Assistant City Solicitor for the City of Cranston. In addition, Raspallo maintained a solo law practice from 1997 until 2017.

Raimondo made Rhode Island history with three judicial nominations that would raise Black, Latina and Asian-American women into the sought-after posts.

She nominated Superior Court Judge Melissa Long to replace Supreme Court Justice Francis X. Flaherty. Long would be the first Black justice to serve on the state Supreme Court. She also nominated Erin Lynch Prata to replace Justice Gilbert V. Indeglia. If the nominations win House and Senate approval, the Supreme Court would be filled by a majority of women.

In addition, Raimondo nominated Linda Rekas Sloan – who has taught as an adjunct professor at RWU Law – to replace Superior Court Judge Michael Silverstein. If approved, Rekas Sloan would become the first Asian-American appointed to the Superior Court.

'Law Isn't a Foreign Language Anymore'



Tim White

[Master of Studies in Law](#)

Investigative reporter Tim White has been honing his craft in Providence and Boston for more than two decades. The recipient of four New England Emmy Awards (and a host of other honors) for his investigative work, White is also executive producer and host of WPRI 12's long-running weekly current affairs program "Newsmakers." He has moderated many live candidate debates, and co-authored a book, *The Last Good Heist*, a study of the New England mob. It's fair to say that he has very little left to prove professionally.

So why return to the classroom mid-career to undertake the challenge of earning a Master of Studies in Law at Roger Williams University School of Law?

"Over my two decades in this job, I have interacted a lot with the judicial and criminal justice system," White explained. "I wanted a broader understanding of the courts, of the legal system, and the MSL program has delivered on that."

Though he won't complete his degree until spring 2022, White is already feeling the impact of his studies.

"I've covered a lot of trials in my day, but last month I was at a Superior Court trial taking notes and – as I listened to the prosecution and defense make their arguments to the judge – it dawned

on me that I was easily following the details of the proceeding, that it wasn't a foreign language to me anymore. And that extra depth of knowledge helped me write a clearer, more comprehensive story for my viewers and readers."

White credits the high caliber of RWU Law faculty for the transformation.

"Criminal Law with Professor [Emily] Sack was hands-down the hardest class I've ever taken in my life – but also one of the most rewarding and eye-opening," he said. "And I loved Con Law with Professor [Diana] Hassel – it's essentially the history of this country seen through the lens of the Supreme Court. The common thread with every instructor I've encountered at RWU Law is their deep knowledge of and passion for their topics. You always feel confident that you're in good hands."

In addition to the professional benefits, White is also pursuing the MSL to improve his ability to advocate for journalists on a more universal scale. He currently serves on the board of directors for the New England First Amendment Coalition, a Boston-based group that aims to defend, promote and expand public access to government and the work it does.

"Transparency is under attack in American journalism right now," White said. "The MSL program has helped me to make important legal arguments when advocating on behalf of government transparency in particular – public records requests and so on. It's stuff I've been doing for two decades, but I take a different approach now when I am, for example, seeking an advisory opinion from the Attorney General's office."

White has encouraged several of his colleagues in journalism to consider the MSL program.

"We need to have a better mastery of the legal system right now in journalism, and the MSL delivers on that," White said. "When we have that broader understanding, it not only benefits us personally, but also the community that we serve."

Born in Newport, Tim White graduated from the University of Massachusetts Amherst with a degree in communications. He and his wife live in Rhode Island with their two children. No stranger to the field of journalism, he is the son of the late Jack White, the Pulitzer Prize-winning investigative reporter.

Yelnosky Patio Dedicated

RWU Law recognizes former Dean Michael J. Yelnosky's contributions by dedicating the law school's popular patio with a plaque in his honor.

November 16, 2020

Michael M. Bowden



Professor Michael J. Yelnosky sits on "his" patio on the day of its dedication, Nov. 4, 2020.

In a quiet ceremony on November 4, RWU Law recognized Professor Michael J. Yelnosky – a founding faculty member of this institution and its Dean from 2014 to 2020 – by dedicating the law school's popular patio with a plaque in his honor.

“It is a small but much-deserved gesture for a man who has dedicated an extraordinary amount of time, energy and passion to RWU Law and its continued success,” noted Yelnosky's successor, Dean Gregory W. Bowman.

Due to safety and social distancing concerns, only Dean Bowman, Professor Yelnosky and RWU President Ioannis N. Miaoulis were physically present at the dedication.

Yelnosky had earlier spoken fondly of his experiences heading the law school.

“I am grateful to so many for supporting and working with me as dean,” he said. “Whether I was working on new programming, fundraising, diversity and inclusion, board engagement, or

attracting and retaining an excellent faculty and staff, I tried to keep the needs of our students and alumni front of mind.”

Yelnosky's deanship marked an important period of growth for the school. At a time when many law schools were retrenching in the wake of the Great Recession, Yelnosky focused on positioning RWU Law to remain “aggressively relevant.”

Under his leadership, the school developed new and [innovative academic programming](#), while opening an experiential learning campus in Providence, [reducing tuition](#), and taking significant steps toward making the school [more diverse and inclusive](#). In the process, Roger Williams became the most affordable private ABA-accredited law school in the Northeast.

“Instead of being back on our heels, we started to declare the ways in which we were not like other law schools,” Yelnosky said. “It gave us, I think, the sense that we could be more than just passive observers of our market.”

His approach did much to solidify and grow confidence in and support for the school among students and alumni, as well as the broader bench and bar.

“A respected scholar, beloved teacher, and skilled ambassador to the Rhode Island bar and judiciary, Michael Yelnosky has set us on the course we will follow for decades to come.”

~ Judge William E. Smith, U.S. District Court for the District of Rhode Island

When Yelnosky stepped down as dean on June 30, voices from across the University community and throughout the state’s bench and bar were [united in their praise for his contributions](#).

“With his deep commitment to public interest law and social justice issues, Michael Yelnosky has provided transformational leadership in guiding RWU Law,” said Judge William E. Smith of the U.S. District Court for the District of Rhode Island, chair of the law school’s Board of Directors. “He is a respected scholar, beloved teacher, and skilled ambassador to the Rhode Island bar and judiciary, who has strengthened the law school’s reputation and relationships throughout the legal field. He has set us on the course we will follow for decades to come.”

A widely recognized expert on employment and labor law, as well as dispute resolution and judicial selection, Yelnosky took a sabbatical for the fall 2020 semester, and will return as a full-time professor in spring 2021.

Yelnosky earned his B.S. degree from the University of Vermont and his J.D. from the University of Pennsylvania.

RWU Law Announces RBG Contest for K-12 Students

Rhode Island elementary, middle and high School students are invited to submit drawings, essays on how iconic U.S. Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg has inspired them

December 2, 2020

Michael M. Bowden



Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg at RWU Law in 2018.

Image Credit: James Jones/RWU Law.

Roger Williams University School of Law, Rhode Island's only law school, is inviting Ocean State students from grades K through 12 to submit essays and drawings on how they have been inspired by the legacy of late Associate Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg of the Supreme Court of the United States, who passed away in September.

The winning entries will be published in *Rhode Island Lawyers Weekly*, as well as being featured on the law school's website and receiving cash and book awards. All entries must be received by Friday, January 15, 2021 at 5:00 p.m. (EDT). Children of current employees or students of Roger Williams University and Roger Williams University School of Law are *not* eligible to participate. Children of alumni *are* eligible.

“Justice Ginsburg cared about equality for all people,” noted RWU Law Professor Emily Sack, who advises the school’s Women’s Law Society. “When she started her fight for women’s equality under the law, it seemed like an impossible task, but she worked hard and persisted, and made great strides for the things she believed in.

“She also knew that this is not something she could accomplish alone, and that we all have a part to play in making a better world,” Sack added. “She famously said, ‘Fight for things you care about, but do it in a way that will lead others to join you.’ At RWU Law, we thought this essay contest would be a wonderful way for all of us, and especially our state’s students, to be inspired by Justice Ginsburg’s life and her call to action.”

Details of the contest for each age group are as follows:

- **Elementary School (Grades K-5)**
 - Create an original piece of artwork on the theme, “How has RBG inspired me?” The artwork may not be traced or copied. Only original works will be considered.
 - Give your artwork a title or short description. Place title at the top of your page.
 - Use the materials that you have available; for example, pencil, crayons, watercolor and markers. Use 8½ x 11” paper.
 - Artwork submissions may be photographed or scanned and then emailed.
 - PRIZE: \$75 and one copy of *I Dissent: Ruth Bader Ginsburg Makes Her Mark* by Debbie Levy
- **Middle School (Grades 6-8)**
 - Compose an original essay on the theme, “How has RBG inspired me?”
 - Length limited to one page, double-spaced (about 250 words)
 - PRIZE: \$100 and one copy of *Notorious RBG Young Readers' Edition: The Life and Times of Ruth Bader Ginsburg* by Irin Carmon & Shana Knizhnik
- **High School (Grades 9-12)**
 - Compose an original essay on the theme, “How has RBG inspired me?”
 - Length limited to two pages, double-spaced (about 500 words)
 - PRIZE: \$150 and one copy of *Notorious RBG: The Life and Times of Ruth Bader Ginsburg* by Irin Carmon & Shana Knizhnik

For all categories, the essay/artwork title should be at the top of page one. Artworks may be scanned. All submissions should be emailed to RBGessay@rwu.edu. Email submissions must include the student’s name, grade and school; the title of artwork or essay; and a parent or guardian’s name and contact information. Entries will be reviewed by grade level, and one winning submission will be selected from each category. Mailed entries will not be considered. Judging will be conducted by members of RWU Law’s Women’s Law Society.

All winning submissions will be announced at the annual Women in Law Leadership Lecture in February, published in *Rhode Island Lawyers Weekly*, and featured on RWU Law’s website. Questions may be directed to RBGessay@rwu.edu.

Bright Anniversaries In Uncertain Times

3L Louisa Fredey and law librarian Nicole Dyszlewski note that 2020 marks the centennial of two milestones – nationally, women gained the right to vote; and in Rhode Island, the right to practice law. But how have these events changed our world – and what comes next?

October 6, 2020

By Nicole Dyszlewski and Louisa Fredey



How will 2020 will be remembered? Certainly as the year of COVID-19. Doubtlessly as a year marked by a contentious presidential election. And one in which a much-needed racial justice reckoning took hold.

But amid all this, we should not forget that 2020 also marks a momentous anniversary for our country and our state. For it was 100 years ago, in 1920, that women, nationally, finally won the right to vote; and, in Rhode Island, also to sit for the bar and practice law in Rhode Island.

It was Elizabeth Buffum Chace who submitted the first petition for women's suffrage to the Rhode Island General Assembly in 1867. It stated, "We, the undersigned, women of Rhode Island, would respectfully represent, that, being law abiding citizens of said State, we are denied the elective franchise, solely on account of our sex." Of course, it would be more than 50 years

before that concern was addressed on January 6, 1920, when the Rhode Island General Assembly ratified the 19th Amendment.

That same year, on September 24, Ada Sawyer – longtime secretary to a male Providence attorney – sat for the Rhode Island bar exam after Supreme Court Associate Justice William H. Sweetland ruled that she qualified as a “person” under the law, and was therefore eligible to be an attorney in spite of her gender.

Today, 54 percent of the current first-year class at Roger Williams University School of Law – Rhode Island’s only law school – identifies as female, as does roughly 36 percent of the membership of the Rhode Island Bar Association. Those numbers are something to celebrate. As voters and lawyers, women attorneys today stand on the shoulders of those who creatively and bravely fought to secure the rights we enjoy today.

And yet, we have not reached the “happy ending” of either story. Voter suppression, unfortunately, remains an issue to this day. And though the African-American Rhode Island suffragist Bertha Higgins is quoted in one source as claiming that a certain “Mrs. Parker, one of our race [Black], was the second to register” to vote in Rhode Island, progress has been imperfect. Rhode Island, for example, still has a voter identification law – a type of law that is known to disproportionately impact communities of color.

Likewise, gender discrimination in the legal field persists – and again, these issues are further amplified for women of color.

One final anniversary: on October 8, 1920, the League of Women Voters of Rhode Island was officially established. This year, also on October 8, members of the legal community will be celebrating the complicated legacy of this centennial – and, as with so many aspects of 2020, it is a celebration that will be overshadowed by the stark reality of just how far we still must go to obtain true equality.

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RWU Law will be holding a free virtual event on October 8, “[100 Years After the 19th Amendment: Their Legacy, and Our Future](#).” For more information, visit law.rwu.edu/events.

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Louisa Fredey is a law student pursuing a dual J.D. in law and M.S. in cybersecurity. Slated to graduate in 2021, Fredey is also president of the Women’s Law Society.